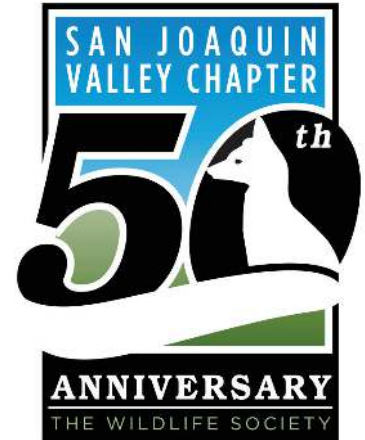


# THE VALLEY FEVER

December 2019



## Seeking Nominations

The San Joaquin Valley Chapter of the Wildlife Society is seeking nominees for the position of President Elect on the Chapter's Executive Board. The position of President is a 3-year commitment with successful nominees serving as President-Elect the first year where they gain exposure to the duties of President; Chapter President the second year where they help to direct and guide Chapter events and opportunities; and Past-President the third year where they help the new Chapter President transition into their new role. The Chapter President serves in a leadership role helping to direct professional development opportunities for Chapter members and other Chapter events. If you are interested in more information about the role of President or in nominating yourself for this role, please contact Chapter President Erin Whitfield at [hart.flat@gmail.com](mailto:hart.flat@gmail.com).

## Donation from The Beatrice and Kevin Olsen Charitable Giving Fund

We received a \$1,000 donation from The Beatrice and Kevin Olsen Charitable Giving Fund. Our Thank You letter is below:

On behalf of the San Joaquin Valley Chapter of The Wildlife Society, I thank you for your generous donation of one thousand dollars. Your contribution will go far in our continued conservation efforts of San Joaquin Valley imperiled species, such as the San Joaquin kit fox. Donations also spearhead student research grants and other activities that propel our students further in their wildlife careers. We appreciate your extraordinary support and consideration. Your donation will go far in conservation and other wildlife support efforts.

Sincerely,

*Erin Whitfield*

Erin Whitfield  
President

# eMammal Snapshot USA: Camera Study in the Sierra Nevada

Petros Chrysafis, [petroschrysafis@gmail.com](mailto:petroschrysafis@gmail.com)

During September-October 2019 I participated in eMammal's Snapshot USA. Snapshot USA is a nationwide effort to obtain camera trap data from all 50 states and from a variety of habitats. I represented Central California by setting up camera traps in some of the most representative habitats present in the area. One of those habitats was a chaparral habitat in the Sierra Nevada. I have had previous experiences in deploying camera traps in chaparral habitat, but this was the first time I did in such a large area.

When I first scouted the area, I noticed signs of a species that has eluded me so far. Fresh mountain lion scat and scrapes were present in a few locations across my study site. Although I had previously deployed camera traps in areas where mountain lion activity occurred, this was the first time the signs were so fresh. In previous locations I had camera trapped, the tracks were either old, the activity was only rumored, or in one particularly sad case a mountain lion appeared a few days after I removed my cameras from that location. Slowly but steadily capturing a mountain lion become my Central Valley's holy grail. I obsessed over camera trap captures in the Angeles National Forest, over at the coast, and in various locations in Northern California. But in my mind, I had to earn the capture in Central California.

I deployed a few cameras where the signs were found, however due to Snapshot USA limitations, each camera had to be placed at least 200 m apart from each other. After placing the cameras, all I had to do was wait for about a month and hope things worked out. During that month I brooded over my deployment. Did I set up the camera traps right? Is it going to face the right angle? Is the mountain lion going to even show up?

The day arrived for the camera trap check. I like leaving my camera traps to capture data for about a month as it ensures that whatever might be disturbed by human activity shows up. I started my hike towards my cameras. I had deployed eleven cameras at various locations. It took me about two to three hours to get there and back and an hour-long drive home. It was going to be a while before I knew whether I had a mountain lion on camera. Once I was done with my camera check, I had about fifteen or sixteen thousand pictures to sort through. I drove home, brewed a cup of coffee, and got started.

Anyone who has ever done camera trapping can tell you that there is a sort of ritualistic process you go through when sifting through the images. Some tend to look at thumbnails first while others tend to just open the first image and continue there. Not being patient, I quickly scanned all the images through the

small thumbnail. The familiar silhouettes of deer, coyote, bobcat, and bear showed up but no mountain lion. My heart sank, but I knew that was a possibility. I began going through the images one by one, sorting out false triggers and recording data. About fifteen minutes later, as I was going through some night images I paused. I looked at the image. The very rear end of an animal with a long tail that curled, with a black tip. An indicative sign of a mountain lion. I thought that this was a mountain lion but it was not a complete confirmation. I noted the date and looked through the rest of the camera trap data for any pictures taken September 20<sup>th</sup>. No lion. But at least it's a start. I continued analyzing my data until the third camera where my hunch is confirmed. There was a mountain lion on my camera except it was at a different date. I finally caught a mountain lion on camera. It was by no means a great capture, but I finally caught it. My holy grail had been acquired.

The feeling of capturing new species on camera traps is something that becomes rarer the longer you camera trap in a particular location. At some point most mammals will make their appearance and your list of first species gets shorter. But then your attention shifts to unique behaviors, capturing better pictures, different settings or even camera trapping in different parts of the world. Camera traps have been a valuable tool for data collection and research but have also allowed many of us to connect to the natural world and experience a world of firsts which would be inaccessible otherwise.



Mountain lion (*Puma concolor*) detected on a trail camera.

## Bearly an Inconvenience

Petros Chrysafis, [petroschrysafis@gmail.com](mailto:petroschrysafis@gmail.com)

When placing remote sensing equipment, there are always various things that can go wrong. The equipment can be tampered with, stolen, or nature can claim it. We always try our best but some loss is expected. Camera traps tend to attract attention from some animal species which can interfere with data collection. Raccoons may move them around; coyote or fox pups may play with strap and deer may rub on them. However, bears tend to be the most destructive since they may claw and bite the camera, remove it from its spot and move it around or even just chew it until it stops working. It's a common enough problem that I decided to share a few tips that may help reduce the interference or loss by black bears.

First, invest in bear boxes if possible. These bear boxes or security boxes are robust metal boxes where camera traps are engaged and tend to prevent most of the damage done by bears. Since most of the bear interference tends to be them trying out the cameras, the metal boxes discourage that behavior. Security boxes come at a cost. Each box may cost between \$40-\$70 so when deploying a lot of cameras it can be costly. They also add significant weight to each camera so if the survey location needs to be accessed on foot, that extra weight can be tricky to carry.

Second, if possible, consider camouflaging the camera. This is a more practical application in grassland habitats but even in forested habitats, camouflaging a camera ensure it doesn't stand out and therefore there is a reduced likelihood that bears will mess it. Camouflaging a camera trap can be as easy as applying fake bark and moss on the camera or as complex as creating elaborate ghillie suits for the camera. Although bears do tend to ignore them, they will mess around with a more textured camera so this technique can be a double-edged sword. The cost of camouflaging the cameras should also be considered as materials may not come cheap.

Third is scent discipline. In my experience bears tend to be attracted to camera traps that have human smell on them. Make sure you have scent discipline and wear gloves when deploying a camera trap. Something simple like eating a snack before setting up a camera can be smelled by a species whose olfactory system is extremely acute. If you are new to scent discipline, I suggest wearing gloves with no powder on them and not handling any smelly lures or food with them. That way you leave as little smell as possible and there is less chance of a bear investigating your camera.

Fourth, give the camera some wiggle room. If you can set up a camera trap to a point where it can be moved around a bit, you will notice that most bears rarely actually try and destroy the camera. If they can move it around, you may end up losing your placement but that is better in my opinion than losing

a camera. I find that when securing cable locks on cameras if I allow for some wiggle room, bears tend to move the camera around but quickly end up losing interest. Although not ideal it ensures that the camera is not lost at least. If you secure the camera too tight, some bears can be stubborn and will not stop until the camera is broken from the straps.

For the fifth option, consider placing the camera high enough where it is out of reach of the bear. Although it compromises detection rates for some species (particularly small mammals), placing the camera over six feet will make it harder for the bear to interact with the camera. This can be achieved by carrying a climbing harness or a small ladder with you. Obviously, this may not be a feasible solution for some habitats but if possible, placing a camera up high makes it more challenging for bears and humans to mess with it.

A sixth option is no-glow or black flash cameras. These cameras do not have the infrared glow and tend to be less obvious to wildlife. This may help with bears that are inquisitive and can mess with a camera at night. They tend to be more costly than low glow cameras and may not be ignored by all bears. It is a gamble but it may be worth it overall as other animals tend to be less skittish around them. Combining a no-glow camera with camouflage significantly reduces your chances of animals detecting the camera at night.

These are six of the options that can be used to hopefully deter bears from interfering with cameras. There are various other homebrew methods that can help deter bears in non-invasive ways but I will say that you should be wary of anything that suggests covering a camera with any scent or taste. Even bear spray can function as an attractant as bears will seek out the scent of capsids and try and bite into your camera. Offensive smells may deter bears initially but that may also lead to a biased data collection as other animals may also avoid the camera. In the end, bears will do what bears want to do but hopefully the damage will be reduced or prevent as much as possible.





Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) detected on a trail camera.

## The San Joaquin Valley Chapter is on Instagram

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The San Joaquin Valley Chapter is on Instagram—our account name is @sanjoaquinTWS. Feel free to send photos of wildlife or fieldwork for posting to:

Howard Clark ([howard.clark.jr@gmail.com](mailto:howard.clark.jr@gmail.com)) or simply tag the IG account in the app.

Western honey bees (*Apis mellifera*) on Matilija poppy (*Romneya coulteri*), northern San Diego Co.  
Photo by Howard Clark.





The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) is pleased to announce the release of a new, revised *Approved Survey Methodology for the Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard*. It can be found on the CDFW survey protocols webpage :

<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Survey-Protocols#377281283-reptiles>

There are several changes that were made from the previous 2004 version. We urge everyone to read through it carefully to prepare early for the 2020 survey season. These changes include:

1. Updating the Department's name and Regional offices to send reports
2. Delaying the beginning time of surveys to 0800 hours
3. Reducing the transect distance for sites with few shrubs and short vegetation to 20 meters
4. Clarifying the types of projects that can use the 8-day protocol for maintenance activities vs. the full 17-day protocol
5. Changing the timing of the hatchling survey period to August 15 to September 30
6. Specifying that at least 2 hatchling survey days occur between August 15-30 and at least 2 survey days occur between September 15-30
7. Clarifying that the adult and hatchling surveys must occur within the same calendar year
8. Requesting that all survey results be submitted to CDFW for review and all observations are reported to California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB)
9. Adding Santa Barbara and Ventura counties to the voucher site requirement
10. Adding a survey reporting form

If you have any questions about the revised protocol, please contact the appropriate CDFW Regional Office —Central Region Habitat Conservation Planning staff at (559) 243-4014 or South Coast Region Habitat Conservation Planning staff at (858) 467-4201 (for Santa Barbara and Ventura counties).



Blunt-Nosed Leopard Lizard (*Gambelia sila*), San Luis Obispo County, CA. Photo by Howard Clark.

# Chapter Executive Board and Committee Chairs

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Erin Whitfield.....President.....Hart.Flat@gmail.com  
Tory Westall.....President-Elect.....twestall@esrp.csustan.edu  
Larry Saslaw.....Past-President.....larry7719@sbcglobal.net  
Julie Vance.....Secretary.....Julie.Vance@wildlife.ca.gov  
Ryan Lopez.....Treasurer.....rlopez@natural-resources-group.com  
Randi McCormick.....Chapter Representative.....randi@mccormickbiologicalinc.com  
Erin Tennant.....Program Development.....erin.tennant@gmail.com  
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Skip Moss.....Conservation Affairs.....smoss@natural-resources-group.com

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**New Mailing Address:** San Joaquin Valley Chapter, 373 E. Shaw Ave. # 230, Fresno, CA 93710

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## The San Joaquin Valley Chapter Area

The San Joaquin Valley Chapter covers a nine county area that includes areas of the San Joaquin Valley, Coastal Range, Sierra Nevada Range, and western Mojave Desert.



## The Goals of the Society and the San Joaquin Valley Chapter

- Develop and maintain professional standards for wildlife research and management.
- Enhance knowledge and technical capabilities of wildlife managers.
- Advance professional stewardship of wildlife resources and their habitats.
- Advocate the use of sound biological information for wildlife policy decisions.
- Increase public awareness and appreciation of the wildlife profession.

